

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 SCCT-01 /083 W

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R 081611Z MAR 76

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1232

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 109

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK. EI

SUBJECT: DIRECT RULE AND NO NEW INITIATIVES AS  
CONVENTION DISSOLVED

REF: BELFAST 106 AND PREVIOUS

1. SPOKESMEN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL AND OTHER GROUPS REACTED CALMLY FOR MOST PART TO EXPECTED ACTION OF HMG IN DISSOLVING CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION BY ORDER IN COUNCIL MARCH 4 AND BY ANNOUNCEMENT OF SECRETARY STATE REES IN COMMONS MARCH 5 THAT DIRECT RULE WOULD CONTINUE, WOULD BE EXTENDED BY RENEWED LEGISLATION AND THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE NO IMMEDIATE NEW INITIATIVES TOWARD DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT. HMG RATIONALE SUMMED UP IN PARAGRAPH REES STATEMENT: "NO SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WITHIN NORTHERN IRELAND WOULD BE STABLE OR EFFECTIVE UNLESS BOTH PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY ACQUIESCED IN THAT SYSTEM AND WERE WILLING TO WORK TO SUPPORT IT. THE PROPOSALS IN THE CONVENTION'S REPORT DID NOT MEET THAT BASIC NEED."

2. REACTIONS RANGED FROM (A) THE NEGATIVE VIEW OF  
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ERNEST BAIRD THAT THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT DIRECT

RULE, THROUGH THE (B) RESENTFUL VIEW OF HARRY WEST THAT THE BRITISH HAD SCUTTLED THE CONVENTION BY UNHELPFUL COMMENTS AND CONTINUING DISCUSSION WITH GUNMEN AIDED BY THE SDLP (SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY) WHO HAD MADE NO CONCESSIONS AND THE (C) RESIGNED VIEW OF VANGUARD AND ALLIANCE WHO HOPE FOR CONTINUED PRIVATE INTER-PARTY TALKS TO THE (D) CHEERY OPINION OF ENOCH POWELL WHO SPOKE OUT IN FAVOR OF DIRECT RULE IN BELFAST MARCH 6. EBULLIENT BELFAST SUNDAY NEWS HEADLINED THIS VIEW MARCH 8 ALONG LINES FAVORITE BELFAST GRAFFITO: "DIRECT RULE OK, SAYS POWELL."

3. THERE NO CALLS FOR REFERENDUM NOR WERE THERE ANY INDICATIONS THAT PLANS HAVE YET BEEN DEVELOPED TO RESIST DIRECT RULE ALTHOUGH BROAD HINTS ABOUT THIS WERE MADE IN CLOSING HOURS CONVENTION MARCH 3. ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE (UVF) OVER WEEKEND RELEASED STRONG STATEMENT CONDEMNING "UNSTATESMANLIKE POLITICIANS" AND CLAIMING UVF HAD NO FEAR OF DIRECT RULE SO LONG AS IT TEMPORARY. STILL PENDING IS DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS (PAISLEY) INTENT TO RECONVENE CONVENTION MARCH 9. THEY HAVE VERY LITTLE SUPPORT FOR THIS HOWEVER AND IT CLEAR GOVERNMENT WILL NOT TOLERATE FURTHER DISRUPTION FROM PAISLEY. REES REFERENCE IN COMMONS TO INCIDENT IN WHICH PAISLEY AND OTHERS RUSHED SECURITY GATES AT STORMONT AND IN COURSE INCIDENT GUARD HAD ARM BROKEN WAS MUCH QUOTED OVER WEEKEND IN NORTHERN IRELAND. REES IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID, "THE BATTLE OF BROKEN ARM WAS PAISLEY'S LAST STAND."

4. THERE IS INTEREST BUT NO STRONG REACTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO REPORTED ATTEMPTS CONSERVATIVE PARTY (NEAVE) AND IRISH PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE CONVINCE HMG OF NEED FOR CONSULTATIVE GROUP TO ADVISE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE DURING PERIOD DIRECT RULE AND SO AVOID "POLITICAL VACUUM." MANY HERE VIEW IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A BODY AS MARGINAL ALTHOUGH IT WOULD ALLEVIATE ORGANIZATIONAL DISTRESS OF SDLP WHICH FACING DISSOLUTION. ALL CONVENTION SALARIES CEASE IN MAY AND SOME PROMINENT SDLP LEADERS WILL HAVE TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE POLITICS.

5. CONGEN DOES NOT SEE "POLITICAL VACUUM" AS INEVITABLE.  
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BRITISH RULE WHILE REMOTE WITH ACCESS TO MINISTER SOMETIMES DIFFICULT HAS BEEN AS RESPONSIVE TO LOCAL NEEDS AND CONCERNS AS POSSIBLE. WHAT IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS IS THAT THERE BE NO "SECURITY VACUUM". IT IS IMPORTANT THAT GOVERNMENT IMPROVE SECURITY MEASURES TO FORESTALL PROTESTANT PARAMILITARIES FROM STEPPING INTO REAL OR APPARENT BREACH TO "DEFEND ULSTER" AGAINST PROVISIONAL IRA. SOME POLITICIANS WILL NOW ATTEMPT TO PRESS PARAMILITARIES

IN THIS DIRECTION. IN OPINION CONGEN PROTESTANT PARAMILITARY GROUPS HAVE NOT YET DEVELOPED AN INTEREST IN DIRECT POLITICAL ACTION. CONCERN IS WHETHER REPUBLICAN GROUPS SUCH AS OFFICIAL AND PROVISIONAL WINGS WILL SUPPLANT SDLP AS INTERMEDIARIES WITH GOVERNMENT IN DIRECT RULE SITUATION.

6. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT IN INABILITY DEVISE ACCEPTABLE FRAMEWORK FOR DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT CONVENTION WAS A "FAILURE". HOWEVER IN TERMS ULSTER HISTORY THERE WERE CONCRETE GAINS. SDLP HAS COME A LONG WAY FROM INSISTENCE ON INSTITUTIONALIZED IRISH DIMENSION AND HAS EXTENSIVELY QUALIFIED ASPIRATION TO UNITED IRELAND. ATTITUDES ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS EMANATING FROM REPUBLIC IRELAND HAVE BEEN HELPFUL IN LONG TERM IN ALLAYING LOYALIST CONCERNS. WHILE ULTIMATE FAILURE CONVENTION CAN BE CONSIDERED TRIUMPH FOR EXTREMISTS, THEIR TACTICS HAVE SEPARATED THEM FROM MODERATES WITHIN UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION. FOR FIRST TIME IN RECENT YEARS SERIOUS CRITICS CANNOT BLAME BRITISH GOVERNMENT FOR COURSE OF EVENTS. IF IMPLEMENTED IN TRUE SENSE A PERIOD OF "BENIGN NEGLECT" CAN BE THERAPEUTIC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICS. SADLY HOWEVER, THE PROVISIONAL IRA REMAINS A PROFOUND AND UNPREDICTABLE INFLUENCE ON THIS DEVELOPMENT.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, MEETINGS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 MAR 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976BELFAS00109  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760087-0814  
**From:** BELFAST  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760386/aaaacxlw.tel  
**Line Count:** 143  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 BELFAST 106  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ShawDG  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 30 AUG 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <30 AUG 2004 by meiwc>; APPROVED <03 DEC 2004 by ShawDG>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** DIRECT RULE AND NO NEW INITIATIVES AS CONVENTION DISSOLVED  
**TAGS:** PINT, UK, EI, SDLP  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006